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9 JAN 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence**  
**SUBJECT : Chinese Communist Claims for Mao as a Theorist**

1. In view of your concern with propaganda exploitation of aspects of the Sino-Soviet dispute, you might be interested in the conclusions of a recent Current Intelligence Staff Study on Mao Tse-tung as a Marxist philosopher. As you know, the Chinese Communists consistently present Mao as the world's foremost living theorist, often by implication as the outstanding theorist since Lenin, and this claim for Mao has been quite a sensitive issue in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

2. The conclusions of this staff study are that the claims for Mao as a contributor to the theory of dialectical materialism, the Marxist-Leninist "explanation" of the universe, are largely spurious; moreover, that Peiping has falsified the dates of composition of the two essays on which the claims for Mao rest, in order to exaggerate the trifling contributions which Mao made. The evidence for these conclusions is presented at some length in the study, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] A similar study will discuss Mao's alleged contributions to historical materialism, the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history.

3. As for the principal points of "creative development" of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism attributed to Mao: (a) Mao's theory of cognition is the same as Lenin's; (b) his

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theory of truth, a rationale for changes in the party line, is a paraphrase of Lenin's, which itself came from Engels; (c) his theory of the unity and struggle of opposites, a rationale for emphasizing now "unity" with and now "struggle" against this or that non-Communist body, is a compression of some formulations of Lenin's; and (d) the most-advertised contribution of Mao to this theory--the distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic "contradictions" (conflicts)--was taken from Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's sometime first lieutenant who died in 1948.

4. The evidence strongly suggests that Peiping has falsified the dates of composition of Mao's essays--alleged to have been written in 1937--in the interest of making Mao appear to have originated certain formulations which he in fact copied from Zhdanov and Stalin. The essays appear to have been actually written in the period 1950-52. Some of the evidence for this is: (a) one of the two essays was not published until 1956, the other not until 1952; (b) editions of Mao's works of the 1937-47 period do not mention either essay; and (c) the writings of other Chinese Communist party leaders in the period 1939-44, writings dealing in part with the very subjects of Mao's essays, do not invoke or even mention the essays, an inconceivable omission if they had indeed existed.

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5. The Russians are well aware that Mao's claims to have contributed significantly to the theory of dialectical materialism are nonsense, and their various letters to the Chinese party in the past year have made clear their exasperation with Chinese claims for Mao as a theorist in general, but they have wisely decided not to make a public issue of this. Similarly, they are probably aware that Peiping has falsified the dates of composition of Mao's essays, and they have chosen not to make an issue of this even privately, as this would amount to calling Mao not only a pretender but an outright rascal. If the issue were introduced into the Sino-Soviet dispute by some third party [redacted] the consequences might be very disagreeable for both Moscow and Peiping. I am sending a copy of this memorandum to [redacted]

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HUNTINGTON D. SHELDON  
Assistant Director  
Current Intelligence

cc: DDCI

OCI, [redacted] mag(9 January 1961)

Orig & 1 - Addressee

1 - DDCI

1 - DDI

1 - Chief, CCP/CA

1 - AD/CI

1 - CA/SSB

1 - SIDO

1 - Orig

1 - DD/P

1 - AD/NE